

Our commitment to fostering the development and achievement of young people should extend beyond our primary and secondary schools to public higher education.



Education

Education encompasses a broad array of instruction, opportunities, services and institutions both public and private. Education is the great democratic equalizer in American society that lifts people and communities from the margins to mainstream and beyond. Recommendations from this section cover the quality, accessibility and content of education for children from birth through college. Adult education issues are discussed in the Adult English Language Proficiency Section.

For immigrant children, integration through education means a smooth transition into the school system and welcoming classroom experiences. While English proficiency should remain a top priority for these students, educators, and other classmates should also be given a deeper understanding of the many cultures within their community through more diverse lessons in their curriculum.

Currently, the levels of drop-out rates among many immigrant students have reached a crisis situation. In particular, the drop-out rate for Latino males— either immigrants or sons of immigrant families— has reached over 25 percent across the Commonwealth.²² Immigrant students are disproportionately likely to drop out of school and fail to reach their intellectual or economic potential. These high rates reflect a variety of challenges including failure to manage transitions for new arrivals, lack of: proper support systems, adequate training for school staff, English proficiency, and access to services in multiple languages. The Commonwealth must work to improve these rates and to better convey to all students their worth and ability. In addition, Massachusetts must support the teachers and educators interacting with immigrant students everyday, often with insufficient resources and assistance.

Our commitment to fostering the development and achievement of young people should extend beyond our primary and secondary schools to public higher education. Massachusetts should provide equal access to higher education for all residents in the Commonwealth.

Massachusetts is the birthplace of universal public education in the United States and the home of the greatest concentration of higher education institutions in the world. The Commonwealth is once again poised to demonstrate world-class leadership in the way it teaches all of its youth and adults to attain the language and skills necessary to be productive members of American society and the global community.



Recommendations

Birth through Grade 12

Early Education and Care

- Continue the work of the Birth to School-Age Initiative at the Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC), specifically the expansion of birth to school-age programs serving Limited English Proficient (LEP) and dual-language children and their families
- Continue to explore the expansion and implementation of universal pre-kindergarten programs in the Commonwealth.

Support for Parents and Families of K-12 Students

- Urge public school districts across the state with significant immigrant student populations to reach out to immigrant parents to participate in parent and oversight committees and serve as classroom helpers, tutors, and Student Support Coordinators. The Student Support Coordinators would conduct outreach to LEP students and their families and help maintain communication between the families and the school under the model recommended by the Education Action Agenda of Governor Patrick's Readiness Project.
- Provide parents enrolling LEP students in schools with a multilingual guide to navigating particular aspects of the state education system, including the following:
 - Parents' rights to request bilingual waivers
 - Parents' right to request a special education evaluation
 - Application and appeal procedures for special education students
 - School rules and procedures
 - Graduation requirements

Curriculum, Staffing, and Professional Development

- Continue to improve the quality of instruction for LEP students by, 1) developing and implementing more differentiated instructional models and strategies, and 2) providing teachers of LEP students with ongoing opportunities to expand their content and pedagogical knowledge.
- Include curricula for professional development of teachers on the teaching of LEP students, cultural competency, immigration history, current Massachusetts immigration trends, and immigration law and privacy into the training and professional development requirements for teachers. Curricula should ensure teachers can effectively incorporate information about the history and culture of students' countries of origin, emphasize the positive contributions of immigrants, describe the current role of immigration in Massachusetts, and emphasize the importance of civics and civic engagement.

As Yessenia Alfaro sees it, her oldest son is a lot like other teenagers who don't like school, but his high school's response to his disinterest was unanticipated.



Yessenia Alfaro

"He was coming in late to school," she says, "And this teacher was telling him, 'Don't worry, you're going to be turning 16 pretty soon...you don't have to worry about coming in early or late. Just sign yourself out of the school system.' And then he did."

Alfaro was stunned. When she couldn't get her son to return, she went to the school herself. "I spoke to the attendance policy person and the school principal, and I asked them, 'Why is it that you allow a person to sign out from school without the consent of the parent?' And they said, 'This is the law. The law says that if you don't want to continue studying and you are 16 years old, you can leave.' So, of course, if you tell a 16-year-old that, he's going to be doing it."

Alfaro emigrated from El Salvador when she was 13, and her children were born as citizens in the United States, yet she knows of other Latino parents in similar straits in this predominantly Latino town. "We don't have many Latino teachers, unfortunately," she says.

She also wonders if recent immigrants from Somalia and elsewhere might face even greater troubles. "We at least know how to navigate the system and speak the language, more or less," she says.

Now, over a year after her son left, he seems directionless. Yessenia says he recently threw away his musical instruments, saying that the school was right: he'll never amount to anything. "I'm not defending him," she stresses. "What bothers me is the system that needs to improve."

Joana always knew she wanted to go to college. "It would be hard," she says, because of her status, but "I was determined."



Joana

Despite the rigors of adjusting to life in a new country, after moving to the United States from Uruguay, she pushed herself to excel throughout high school and was able to win a scholarship to a local community college. However her status confined her to nighttime off-campus classes taught by part-time faculty.

"I was never able to take morning classes", she explained, and that "made it harder".

Despite also working full-time, Joana finished her associate's degree in business administration in two years. By that time she had become a lawful permanent resident and was able to enroll as a student at a four-year state college. While completing her bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies, she worked at a local community center as an interpreter and business manager, using her hard earned skills to give back to her community.

Cheerful and tenacious, she now works full-time at the same community center assisting clients dealing with education, public safety, health, and other issues.

When asked about what she wants to do with her degrees, the confident 22 year old says, "I want to help people at the center and in the future providing translation at courts and hospitals."

Education

- Motivate educators to work within the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework to emphasize the history of immigration in the U.S., positive contributions of immigrants, the current role of immigration in Massachusetts and the importance of civics and civic engagement. Where possible also, incorporate information about the history and culture of students' countries of origin.
- Urge the state's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) to develop a cultural competency curriculum that can be disseminated statewide. Request that the agency develop a bank of professionals who can provide cultural competency training for schools and other public agencies or organizations.
- Request district administrators and school leaders in communities with significant immigrant populations to emphasize multilingual and multi-cultural skills when hiring teachers and other school personnel.
- Provide professional development for guidance counselors on career and academic guidance for immigrant students which promote the student's increased participation in math and science and support the retention of these students.

Dropout Prevention and Alternative/Vocational Education

- Promote strategies and programs to decrease dropout rates, increase graduation rates, and increase college matriculation rates of immigrant students. In particular, support the implementation of research-based intervention strategies that are being developed by districts that are currently utilizing the Early Warning Index- a data system that is being managed by ESE.
- Provide increased flexibility around the age of students able to enroll in both traditional and alternative high schools. Improve support for alternative education programs to serve students who have aged out of traditional high schools.
- Require ESE to provide specific student outcome information about LEP students enrolled in alternative education programs.
- Urge vocational schools to increase outreach to immigrant populations.

Implementation of Existing Policy

- Create state regulations which detail what language programs schools are allowed to implement when working with LEP students and how schools should identify LEP students, in the context of the current law on bilingual education (MGL Chapter 71A).
- Ensure consistent implementation of the process by which LEP students are identified (http://www.doe.mass.edu/ell/sei/identify_lep.html). Require the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) to re-evaluate the criteria currently used for determining the placement of these students.

Education

- Issue a policy statement from ESE to all public schools clarifying that school staff members are prohibited by federal law from inquiring about students' immigration status.

Postsecondary

- As recommended by the Patrick administration's Education Action Agenda, provide access to in-state tuition rates for state colleges and universities for all immigrant students residing in Massachusetts for at least three years and graduating from a Massachusetts high school or receiving a GED (General Educational Development Test).
- Allow all immigrant students access to state financial aid programs offered through the Office of Student Financial Assistance.
- Request that the Department of Higher Education conduct a review into the implementation of its 2007 policy affirming in-state tuition access for all students lawfully present in the United States. In addition, require the department to re-issue the policy to ensure consistent implementation and provide mandatory training for admissions staff at all public colleges and universities regarding the policy.
- Urge public colleges and universities to provide information they produce on the application process and financial aid in multiple languages. In addition, request institutions to offer workshops to immigrant families on financial aid and general financial literacy.
- Require the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority to create programs designed for low-income families.
- Increase funding, support and prevalence of dual immersion programs in which all students receive instruction in both English and another language, allowing them to become fully bilingual.
- Increase funding of the Individual Development Account (IDA) programs to promote savings for college and other educational expenses.



Promoting trust and communication between community members and law enforcement is crucial to creating safe and healthy communities.



Public Safety

In recent years, federal immigration authorities have made concerted efforts to increase participation of local law enforcement in immigration enforcement activity. This shift of responsibility not only represents a failure of the federal authorities to properly implement their own programs but also places a great strain on local law enforcement. Enforcement of federal immigration law not only drains time and financial resources from local law enforcement but also contributes to a deep and dangerous rift and mistrust between local communities and police.

In many immigrant communities, partnerships between local police and federal immigration authorities—both formal and informal—have made community members afraid to cooperate with police and call on police for necessary assistance. This chilling effect causes many problems. The first is that immigrants are afraid to contact police when they are in dangerous situations or have been the victims or witnesses to crimes. This fear allows criminal activity to flourish unchecked by police who may not be aware of the crimes. In addition many criminals prey upon the silence of immigrant communities, targeting immigrants because they are less likely to report the crimes.

The divide between communities and law enforcement also leads to increased misunderstanding on both sides. Law enforcement officers are denied the opportunity to learn about the local community and interact with immigrant constituents, and immigrant communities are denied the opportunity to learn about the services and protections they are entitled to receive from local law enforcement. Promoting trust and communication between community members and law enforcement is crucial to creating safe and healthy communities. Building this trust is not possible when immigrants believe that local police will cooperate with federal immigration authorities. These recommendations seek to improve communication and outreach between public safety agencies and immigrant communities while also striving to provide both with the tools necessary to ensure the safety of all residents.



Recommendations

Enforcement

- Discourage questioning by local and state police on the immigration status of those involved in crimes including victims, witnesses, and suspects. Reiterate the policy directive banning State Police from engaging in enforcement of federal immigration laws and encourage similar policies for local police departments.
- Create a policy that discourages local law enforcement agencies from entering into 287g Memoranda of Agreement with federal immigration authorities. The state should reduce funding for local law enforcement agencies participating in such agreements. Also, rescind the Department of Corrections 287g Memorandum of Agreement.
- Develop a clearer method of reporting alleged police abuses to the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS), and increase education and outreach efforts to immigrant communities about the different roles of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.



Relationship between police and communities

- Support local and state police efforts to improve communication with Limited English Proficient (LEP) populations through a variety of methods including: distributing cards printed in common local languages which explain what to do when pulled over, how a traffic stop is conducted and what the officers might ask; offering demonstrations of routine stops; distribute (to all stations and substations, including field officers) language identification cards for use in quickly identifying the native language of an LEP individual during an interaction with police officers; create and maintain a directory of approved interpreters and translators.
- Advocate for a new generation of community policing grants.
- Promote the development of ethnic community advisory groups for local police, along a community policing model, to ensure ongoing dialog.
- Encourage state and local police departments in areas with significant immigrant populations to hire community liaisons to work with the immigrant community. These individuals must be bilingual, bicultural and would conduct outreach to the community about police policies and ongoing programs and activities, while also relaying concerns from the community to the police.
- Create an advisory commission or board to identify best practices being employed by local police departments on immigrant issues and convene an annual conference of law enforcement officials to provide education, training, and sharing of these best practices.

The importance of driver's licenses to the well being of the immigrant community and the Commonwealth as a whole was heavily stressed at all of the public meetings.

- Require mandatory training for all law enforcement recruits and in-service personnel on issues of cultural competency, linguistic diversity, and immigration law and statuses. The state should use its financial leverage to urge local departments and agencies to execute such training. Where possible training should be conducted by leaders from the community partnered with bicultural law enforcement officers.
- Encourage first responder agencies (police, fire, and paramedics) in areas with significant immigrant populations to increase the number of bilingual staff members to better reflect the demographics of the communities they serve.

Driver's Licenses/Identification

The importance of driver's licenses to the well being of the immigrant community and the Commonwealth as a whole was heavily stressed at all of the public meetings. In addition to the obvious public safety interest of having all driver's licensed, regulated and insured, many other important considerations were raised. Police chiefs and public safety officers— both through the public meetings and policy groups— expressed their support for greater access to driver's licenses to improve the safety of roads, to ease identification of individuals during police interactions, and to reduce the instances of driving without a license, freeing valuable time and resources to investigate and deter other, more serious offenses.

Access to driver's licenses was one of only two recommendations raised at all of the six public meetings. The Governor's Advisory Council heard many stories from individuals afraid to drive to vital services because they are not able to obtain driver's licenses. The inability to drive securely has left individuals afraid to drive their children to school, relatives to the hospital, or themselves to work.

Although this recommendation had overwhelming support, it must be considered in the context of the current federal REAL ID statute which lays out qualifications each state must meet in order to have their state-issued driver's license recognized as a valid federal identification document. The REAL ID statute places many burdens on the state and provides almost no funds to implement its regulations. However, failure to adhere to the statute would mean that a Massachusetts driver's license would no longer be accepted as identification for entering federal buildings or boarding an airplane. This would have severe and costly consequences for residents across the state. Therefore at this time the Governor's Advisory Council's recommendations must focus on efforts to repeal the REAL ID act, and if a repeal is successful or the statute is no longer a barrier, working toward providing access to driver's licenses.

- Create a uniform policy, through the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV), detailing current eligibility for driver's licenses including detailed information about the variety of immigration statuses which allow individuals to apply for a license. Institute a mandatory training on the clarified policy for RMV staff. Also work toward improved customer service through sensitivity training for RMV staff.



- Champion the repeal of the Real ID federal statute through the Massachusetts Congressional delegation, National Association of Governors, and all other available avenues.
- If Real ID is repealed, provide access to driver's licenses to all individuals who are able to demonstrate residency, pass the required examination, and prove identity (through means not limited to Social Security Numbers).
- Improve access to driver's licenses by making the manual and other RMV materials available in the same languages as the written test, either in print or through reliable on-line translations.
- Provide access to State ID cards to all individuals able to demonstrate residency.

Domestic Violence

- The state should issue a policy statement encouraging victims of domestic violence to report crimes and assuring victims protection of their immigration status. Such a statement should also be made available in various languages and distributed throughout the statewide network of immigrant-serving community organizations.
- Expand the Refugee and Immigrant Safety and Empowerment Program (RISE) program to adequately address current geographic limitations while also increasing outreach to immigrant communities about domestic violence and how to access services. Also prioritize LEP communities in the distribution of other domestic violence treatment and prevention grants in order to address the disproportionate incidence of domestic violence in these communities.
- The state should support a research study investigating the scale and impact of human trafficking in the Commonwealth.
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Employment and Workforce Development

... increasing pathways for immigrants' economic mobility will greatly benefit the state's current and future economy.



Workforce development broadly describes the collaborative and networked practices and services produced by multiple actors and intermediaries (private, public and non-profit, unions, educational organizations, etc.) to improve labor market access and the opportunities of workers with all kinds of socioeconomic, demographic, educational characteristics and skill levels. The broad objective of workforce development strategies is to match workers and employers. However, the strategies may be guided by an array of different strategic objectives: short-term employability, long-term skills building, sector growth, educational improvement, professional transitions, and improving work quality. At any given moment, a combination of such strategies may be needed to match the conditions workers face in the labor market and the needs of employers.

Immigrants are a vital and growing part of the state's workforce. Between 1980 and 2004, the share of immigrants in the workforce grew from 8.8 percent to 17 percent.²³ Moreover, the state's economic competitiveness is based on technology, science and knowledge, and immigrants currently provide greater technology and science-based skills than the native-born. Consider these research findings:

- Among highly educated recent immigrants in Massachusetts, 24 percent hold a master's degree or higher compared to 16 percent of natives. Immigrants also account for 50.3 percent of all PhD's residing in the state.²⁴ These highly educated immigrants bring technology and science skills that enhance biotechnology, technology, health care and educational sectors that are vital to the Massachusetts' economy and keep the Commonwealth competitive in the world economy.
- In the Massachusetts health care industry, immigrants are 51 percent of medical scientists, 40 percent of pharmacists and 28 percent of physicians and surgeons.²⁵

However, immigrants are also likely to be less highly educated and live in non-English speaking households. Many within this immigrant group fill critical job vacancies in low-wage jobs that many native-born residents are unlikely to take. Immigrants clean and guard our hotels, convention centers, and office buildings—serve fast food— and are the frontline of long-term and home health care. However, these low-wage jobs are largely disconnected from career advancement, benefits, and representation. Advancement requires good education, English-language skills, strong interpersonal “soft skills” and hard technology skills, but opportunities for immigrants to move up career ladders are severely limited. Geographical concentration of immigrants into economically depressed cities and towns where job creation, training opportunities, and social supports are restricted further exacerbates the problems.

Investing in the workforce strategies and initiatives that represent best practices for linking the supply of immigrant workers to both short term and long term labor force demands and increasing pathways for immigrants' economic mobility will greatly benefit the state's current and future economy.

Recommendations

Career Pathways

- Create better access, through the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, to career pathways for immigrants by:
 - Maintaining statistics on the number of foreign-born clients being served in various career and employment programs
 - Develop and promulgate best practices for One Stop Career Centers for serving immigrant populations
 - Improve availability and access to apprenticeship programs for immigrants, including union apprenticeship programs
 - Continue to provide work supports and supportive services to immigrants enrolled in training programs
- Continue to support the Workforce Training Fund and Workforce Competiveness Trust Fund as existing vehicles that provide important training to immigrants. Maintain statistics on immigrants being served through this funding.
- Urge all regional Workforce Investment Boards to more closely collaborate with immigrant-serving organizations in their communities.
- Leverage federal stimulus funds with a focus on increasing services and training for refugee and immigrant populations.
- Work toward increasing access to affordable childcare to help immigrants and low-income populations access job opportunities.

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Workers Rights

- Issue state guidance to prohibit employers from providing employees' personal information to federal immigration authorities. Also work to discourage the expansion of the federal E-Verify program.
- Support the Temporary Workers' Right to Know Bill and the Wage Compliance and Recordkeeping Bill.
- Increase protections for day laborers including banning harassment of individuals and intrusive recording and photographing.



When Simbagoye Emmanuel was two-weeks old his family left their native Burundi, fleeing the 1972 genocide of Hutus. It took 35 years before they found another permanent home. "We travelled many countries: from Burundi to Congo, from Congo to Rwanda, from Rwanda to Tanzania," Emmanuel says in halting, careful English. "That's why the U.S. government took us to come here."

In 2007, the Emmanuel family resettled in Springfield. He hoped to resume the career he'd practiced in Tanzania. "In all Africa, there was a problem of people that need help in medicine," he explains. "That's why I chose to go to study nursing."

In Springfield, however, Emmanuel found that the "African English" he'd used in Tanzania was nothing like "American English." For six months he studied English in an Adult Basic Education program then took a two-month class to become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). Although he passed the certification exam, it was difficult to find a job without a car. "I stayed two months at home," he says. "But in that two months, I was reading the driving book." He obtained his learner's permit, applied for re-certification money for driver's education from the Office of Refugees and Immigrants, and received a donated car from a church. After that, he says, he found a permanent full-time job "without any problem."

Now Emmanuel works as a CNA at the LifeCare Center in Wilbraham. Hoping to become a registered nurse or physician's assistant, he recently enrolled in community college, and his wife has also begun studying nursing. Meanwhile, his three children have taken quickly to Springfield. "Springfield is very nice to me because I'm getting better! I'm improving, my kids are improving, my wife is improving," he says, pausing reflectively. "Yeah."

Certification/Re-certification

- Improve access to re-licensing for immigrants and refugees with professional degrees from their home country, including a review of current licensing regulations, creation of a website with centralized information about re-licensing, and centers to provide information on re-licensing. Urge the Department of Higher Education to develop policies that assist immigrant professionals complete the additional coursework necessary to attain re-certification.
- Increase the availability of public transportation in underserved areas to improve access to job opportunities for immigrants and low-income populations.
- Support increased funding for the Fair Labor Division of the Attorney General's Office to continue its work enforcing wage and labor laws—recovering earned, yet unpaid wages for employees— and tax dollars for the state.



Simbagoye Emmanuel and family

Access to State Services

Title VI of the US Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that all organizations and agencies that receive federal funds are required to provide adequate linguistic access to Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals. These regulations apply to most state agencies and services and mandate that those agencies, within federal regulations, accommodate the language needs of individuals to provide program access. Access to interpreter and translation services across state government depends largely on the practices and policies of individual agencies, which vary from one state agency to another.

The state would benefit from a better understanding of how these services are provided across state government and a more consistent level of access. These recommendations strive to improve upon the design and delivery of state services for all residents. Beyond the technical changes and suggestions there is also a focus on education and outreach, both for agency staff on immigrant issues and cultural competency and for immigrant communities on available services.

Recommendations

Linguistic Access

- Improve LEP populations' access to state agencies by:
 - Requiring agencies to have information about basic services available in multiple languages—whether in print or through reliable internet-based translation services—and encourage agencies to recruit and hire multilingual staff
 - Issuing an Executive Order reaffirming the federal obligation for state agencies to make their services reasonably accessible to LEP clients with a requirement that each agency or department to assign a specific staff person(s) to monitor compliance with federal law and internal agency regulations on LEP access
 - Strengthening the Executive Office of Administration and Finance to monitor and provide resources for state agencies, in partnership with a fully funded Office for Refugees and Immigrants, to coordinate state policy on language access
 - Establishing a process to monitor state agency compliance with federal and state statutes and regulations on LEP access



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- Funding the Office of Access and Opportunity to conduct a survey of the ways state agencies are attempting to meet the needs of LEP residents in the Commonwealth
 - Extending all language access requirements to all contractors and vendors that do business with the Commonwealth
 - Create a centralized state office, housed in the Office for Refugees and Immigrants, for interpreter and translation services for state agencies. The Office for Refugees and Immigrants should develop contracts with community-based organizations as well as with language service agencies to assure availability of a range of language access resources. Also encourage the use of innovative technologies for interpretation.
 - Establishing a multilingual resource line or office for immigrants and other newcomers to access information about state services
 - Purchasing, through the Governor's Office of Civic Engagement, a set of translation equipment for use at state public meetings
- Establish a web-based clearinghouse of multilingual school related documents, housed at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, which schools could access to avoid overlapping translation costs for common and statewide documents. Also encourage schools with significant LEP student populations to provide interpreters at important school meetings.
 - Require the Human Resources Division (HRD) of the Governor's Office to encourage agencies to recruit and hire more multilingual staff and promote the development of internship programs for multilingual and multi-cultural students.

Training

- Evaluate current cultural competency training within state agencies and if deemed appropriate develop, pilot, and implement a new or expanded curriculum for mandatory training across all agencies for front line staff, support staff, and managers, to promote cultural competence and a basic understanding of various immigrant statuses and immigrant issues.
- Incorporate customer service and cultural sensitivity questions into the annual performance review for state employees, linking performance in these areas to career advancement.

- Enact specific disciplinary actions, within the regulations of the existing human resources structure of each agency and department, for state employees who inappropriately inquire about immigration status, refuse to offer immigrants valid state services, or report an immigrant's status to federal immigration authorities unless required to do so by statute. Also create a hotline for reporting misconduct by state employees regarding immigration status.
- Require cultural competence training based on the Department of Public Health's Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) standards for all service providers contracting with the state.

Outreach

- Encourage state agencies to distribute information about programs and policies at community sites such as parent information centers, places of worship, health centers, hospitals, schools, community organizations, libraries, and ethnic websites.
- Expand the Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI) work with libraries and other local partners to establish welcoming events and information hubs for newcomers.
- Create a page on the Office for Refugees and Immigrants website with information for immigrants about state offices, civil rights, and service providers, available in multiple languages.
- Elevate the Office for Refugees and Immigrants to a cabinet level agency. As demonstrated by this report, immigrants affect and are affected by all aspects of state government and activity. Therefore it is vital that a single overarching body be responsible for coordinating these efforts at a cabinet level, with the authority to respond to the work of many different agencies.
- Provide full state funding for the Office to fulfill its statutory authority as a coordinating agency for all state policy regarding immigrants.



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Citizenship Assistance

Citizenship is a crucial step in many immigrants' integration into American society. For many, citizenship is the beginning of a new life of civic engagement and full participation in American society. For the Commonwealth, new citizens offer a commitment to the future and a continuous strengthening of the state.

While we recognize that the federal government determines citizenship eligibility, we as a state should do all in our power to promote citizenship and assist those who are eligible. It is estimated that as many as 180,000 Massachusetts residents are currently eligible to apply for citizenship.²⁶ One goal of the New Americans Agenda is to discover what barriers these individuals face and work to reduce them. During the course of the public meetings many people highlighted challenges such as the need for assistance with test preparation, English classes, form preparation and other logistical challenges, including the cost of the test and application.

The Commonwealth currently provides citizenship assistance through a state appropriation; however the amount funded covers services to only a very small fraction—less than two percent—of eligible individuals.²⁷ In order to maximize the total number of New Americans who can become citizens, the Commonwealth must increase its own investment in citizenship assistance programs while at the same time using its leverage to promote similar programs offered through private and nonprofit organizations.

By addressing these challenges, the Commonwealth will renew its commitment to supporting those who choose to become citizens and active members of American society, while also receiving an increase in federal funds for the care and assistance of those in need of support.

Recommendations

- Expand funding of the Citizenship for New Americans Program and other legal services programs to assist with naturalization and outreach to better identify the 180,000 or more eligible Lawful Permanent Residents residing in the Commonwealth.
- Request that the Department of Revenue study the feasibility of creating a refundable tax credit for Massachusetts state taxes for naturalization expenses, or other incentives.
- Promote more volunteer and civic engagement opportunities through programs for citizens to assist immigrants in the citizenship process.



Health

The foundation of individual and community health is a well-coordinated health care system that is easily accessible, culturally competent, and resourceful in the face of challenge. Access to quality health care for individuals and families provides stability and support as newcomers make the enormous adjustments to American society. Although Massachusetts has made a bold commitment to healthcare reform, immigrants still face many challenges in accessing adequate health care. The most basic challenges are inability to enroll in healthcare programs due to financial or status-based restrictions, linguistic access, and cultural competency of providers.

These and other barriers make non-citizens vulnerable to health problems. According to one national study non-citizen Latinos are 7% less likely to have seen a doctor in the past year than their citizen counterparts. This number jumps to 12% for non-English speakers in the same categories.²⁸ In addition non-citizens are 20% more likely than citizens to postpone care for illness.²⁹ These delays in treatment are often precipitated by language and insurance barriers and can lead to longer illness, permanent ailments, and premature death. These devastating effects impact not only individual families and the broader immigrant community but also impose serious burdens on the health system by creating an overreliance on emergency services. Access to regular medical treatment and preventative care provides significant health benefits while also decreasing the overall cost of care.

Beyond these challenges is the difficult work of reconciling widely divergent cultural views of medicine, treatment, and communication. The recommendations in this section seek to address these challenges while also working to further improve healthcare institutions and the success of Massachusetts healthcare reform as a whole.

Recommendations

Community Health Systems – Networks of Care

- Ensure that the immigrant community be included as a category in health care disparities studies and initiatives. Implement recommendations based on findings from the state's Health Disparities Initiatives. (see http://www.mass.gov/hdc/about/2006_report.pdf)
- Use the Department of Public Health (DPH) licensing and Determination of Need processes to improve access for refugees and immigrants at hospitals by (1) posting tested universal symbols to indicate departments and locations and (2) assuring immigrant and refugee residents' participation and voice through advisory councils. Require DPH to study and identify other strategic mechanisms to increase access at hospitals.

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Access to quality health care for individuals and families provides stability and support as newcomers make the enormous adjustments to American society.



- Support an Act Strengthening Health Reform, which would allow MassHealth to provide elderly and disabled refugees access to home care (House Bill 1166).
- Develop, through the Department of Public Health, an immigrant outreach campaign to increase knowledge and awareness of public health programs such as Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Program, preventive health and wellness programs.
- Support basic adult dental services coverage by MassHealth.

Healthcare Professionals

- Require, with the Department of Public Health's Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) standards, training for all direct service providers contracting with the Department of Public Health.
- Partner with the Massachusetts Medical Society and other professional medical organizations to develop and implement continuing medical education programs that incorporate cultural competency training. Work to expand opportunities in medical schools for medical students to meaningfully engage with refugee and immigrant families to increase cultural competency and understanding of newcomers.
- Use workforce development funds to increase upward job mobility of diverse healthcare providers at all levels. Use One Stop Career Centers, training programs, and community college collaborations to increase targeted outreach to immigrant communities about careers in health care.
- Provide incentives for community and state colleges to develop flexible study models for medical interpreter certificate programs. The programs should offer flexible hours, home study, and reduced tuition and would build a cadre of certified medical interpreters.

Language Access

- Ensure that all hospitals and health centers comply with language access requirements under Title VI of the US Civil Rights Act of 1964, by providing interpreters to Limited English Proficient (LEP) patients. Amend the Department of Public Health's licensing requirements to incorporate the use of universal symbols to indicate departments and locations in hospitals and health centers.
- Require hospitals to publish information about their language access compliance, including number of interpreters on staff, languages spoken, number of patients requiring interpretation, languages spoken by patients, number average wait for interpreter, and other relevant data.

Health Insurance

- Ask the Insurance Commissioner to adopt language requirements in the application process and customer services of state-licensed insurers.
- Increase the number of languages in which MassHealth eligibility and enrollment forms are offered.
- Require interpreting assistance in completing and filing of insurance applications.
- Ensure that the needs and issues of the refugee and immigrant community are represented in the implementation planning for Chapter 58 healthcare reform.
- Restore full funding in Commonwealth Care for legally present immigrants whose coverage was reduced in the fiscal year 2010 budget.

Federal Issues

- Urge the Obama Administration and the Massachusetts Congressional delegation to restore federal Medicaid coverage for all legally present immigrants by eliminating the five year bar on Medicaid eligibility and other federal safety net benefits for legal permanent residents. Also advocate to expand the definition of “qualified alien” to include more legally present immigrants under color of law (PRUCOL), such as victims of trafficking, temporary protected status, asylum applicants, etc.
- Advocate the easing of immunization requirements for applicants for lawful permanent residence.
- Increase funding for community health centers that provide the first access to health care for refugees.
- Codify MassHealth Outreach and Enrollment grants program and restore line-item funding.

